1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

There is often very great disproportion of age in Toda marriages. I have already given two cases in which the woman is the older, in each of which the disproportion of age is due to the custom of marrying a *matchuni*. More commonly the man is much the older, and there are at the present time many cases in which elderly men are married to young girls. This is partly due to the practice of infant marriage. Unless a widower can take advantage of the *tererstthi* custom, which is always expensive, he may have to marry a child and wait till she has reached a marriageable age. Thus, Kòdrner, my guide, lost his wife some years ago, and then married a girl whose present[1] age is only thirteen, Kòdrner being forty-two. The girl is still living with her parents, and will probably not go to her husband for another three or four years.

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The Custom of 'Tererstthi

The marriage tie among the Todas at the present time has become very loose. Wives are constantly transferred from one husband, or group of husbands, to another, the new husband or husbands paying a certain number of buffaloes to the old. The amount of the compensation or *ter* is settled by a council, and from this the transaction has received its name of *tererstthi*, or "compensation he tells (decides)."[2]

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There is much reason to believe that this custom has altered its character in recent times. I was told that formerly the custom only applied to cases in which a man had lost his wife by death. If he wished to marry a woman who was already the wife of another or others, he went to the father of the woman and asked for his consent. The father would consult with two other elders, and if they were in favour of the proposed transaction the three elders would go to the woman, and if they obtained her consent they then went to her husband for his. If husband or wife were unwilling to be parted nothing was done, but if both consented, the new and

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[1] In 1902.

[2] *Ter* is also used in the sense of 'fine,' but is only used when the fine takes the form of a buffalo or buffaloes. A money fine is called *sarav*.

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

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The Toda woman is restricted by the force of circumstances to consort with from four to five husbands. Her marriage is also quite respectable; and in point of antiquity, it probably 'whips creation.' She weds for life, 'for better, for worse;' and the married couple give actual security for good behaviour.

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That this practice is neither a modern creation nor peculiar to the Todas alone, history and works of modern travel afford ample evidence. It will amply suffice for our purpose to quote a few instances.

The Bible, in making frequent mention of customs of the barbarians—in the midst of whom we find the Jews, on their first rising to notice, embedded—strictly analogous to those which obtain amongst the Todas, in respect to matrimony; leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that polyandry was, in those early days, an old and well-established institution in the world. And that such is really the truth, will become more and more evident, as from time to time, in the course of these pages, I have recourse to Scripture in drawing attention to ancient usage. Indeed the strong feeling I entertain, that in the Todas, we have actually a living specimen of some of these races, renders the reference to the historical evidence of the Bible, the more fascinating, as it is important.

Polyandry was a recognised institution[1] amongst the famous Aryas—the race to which we English, in common with most civilised nations, have lately found ourselves to be allied by ties of language, and perhaps of consanguinity.

It is still practised by portions of that race, now settled in the Western Himalayas.

It has been noted as a custom of the ancient Medes and Getes.

Cæsar's description of the mode of matrimonial alliance,

[1] Talboys-Wheeler, 'History of India.'

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

remain unchanged in habits, almost through all time: but in the presence of a superior civilisation, action may be observed to commence; habits improve, though perhaps only up to a certain low stage, almost insensibly, and much as a flower expands, chemically influenced in the light of the sun.

The combined institutions of the dower and inheritance, afford as strong guarantees for the stable nature of the marriage tie as any race of inferior moral culture could well give. Indeed, no social customs redound more to their credit for practical sagacity than these. The young man makes his offer of marriage, which being accepted, the bargain, so far as he is concerned, is closed, and his dowry is *held to be due*. The girl, after sufficient deliberation, accepts this man: when the father is liable for her portion, to the man who has now become her husband.

Women, as we have seen, not being able to inherit property, the husband and father of the family is alone responsible for the food supply.

If then at any time the wife should be discarded, the whole of her family would be interested in the question of 'who is to feed her,' and thus naturally as it were, become guardians of the law. Or if, on the other hand, the wife should leave her husband's protection, he would claim from her father, restitution of the dowry he had paid. Had it been their custom that women could inherit property, men might wash their hands of the duty of supporting wife and family, and women would have encouragement to separate from their husbands, taking their children with them. Of course, such simple traps for restraining the sexes, could never hold, except in conditions of much honesty and good faith. A child left to starve, or a woman to beg or earn a separate livelihood, are sights absolutely unknown in such a united community.

Instances have occurred, but are acknowledged to be rare; of the bridegroom not having found the means of fulfilling his part of the compact; not having paid the dowry, even by

13: Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW60 Toda AW60

428 614 on the men's side of the *polm* (a subdivision of the clan in which members are grouped for certain economic duties incumbent upon them, see Rivers, *The Todas*, p. 544) succeeding to the property of those men who die without male issue. There is never any adoption 597 of children and the custom is unknown.

614 The two moieties of the Todas are endogamous, Tardharsh marrying only Tardharsh and Teivilkh only Teivilkh. But inside each of these [616] sections, the paternal clans and matrilineal descent groups are strictly [837] exogamous. Extra-marital relations within these, when they occur – which they undoubtedly do – practically exclusively take place between [582] members of the paternal clans and never, it can safely be said, within the polkhliol. They are always considered incestuous. Avoidance of [835] this kind is pushed so far, at least in public, that when, for instance, I [123] once took Peidz of Karsh (44) for a ride in my car with one of the sons of Tilipa of Karsh (12), he refused to sit on the seat at the back with her but insisted on being next to me, because, he said, she was his classificatory grandmother.

582 Child-marriage is regularly practised, little Toda boys and girls being betrothed before they are three years old, preferably to their 584 *matchuni* or cross-cousin, that is, the son or daughter of their father's sister or of their mother's brother. If no *matchuni* properly speaking is available, some other child, classified as such by extension of the term in accordance with Toda kinship usages, is generally chosen, the rules of endogamy and exogamy being, of course, observed.

581 As is usual in India, the object of these child-marriages seems to be 584 mainly religious. It is considered that no one can properly accomplish his or her duties to the gods unless he or she is married. Death, [775] especially for someone single, would be a calamity, as he or she would not be able to enter Amnor and would wander aimlessly about as a [588] ghost. That is why, when a Toda child dies before being married, [766] however young (even only a few days), its body has first to be wedded to somebody appropriate before the funeral ceremony can be proceeded with.

595 178 The Todas are known to be polyandrous, and the custom is widespread and still very vigorous within the tribe. But they are not only that, being also polygynous, sometimes forming conjoint-marriages, and monogamous. I found them practising all these forms of marriage as widely as in the days of Rivers, although the latter did make the arresting remark that monogamy with them might well develop out of polyandry combined with polygyny, each of the men in such a species